

MARCH
2006

New moon: 29th;
Full moon: 14th

NIGHTFALL

Huachuca Astronomy Club of Southeastern Arizona



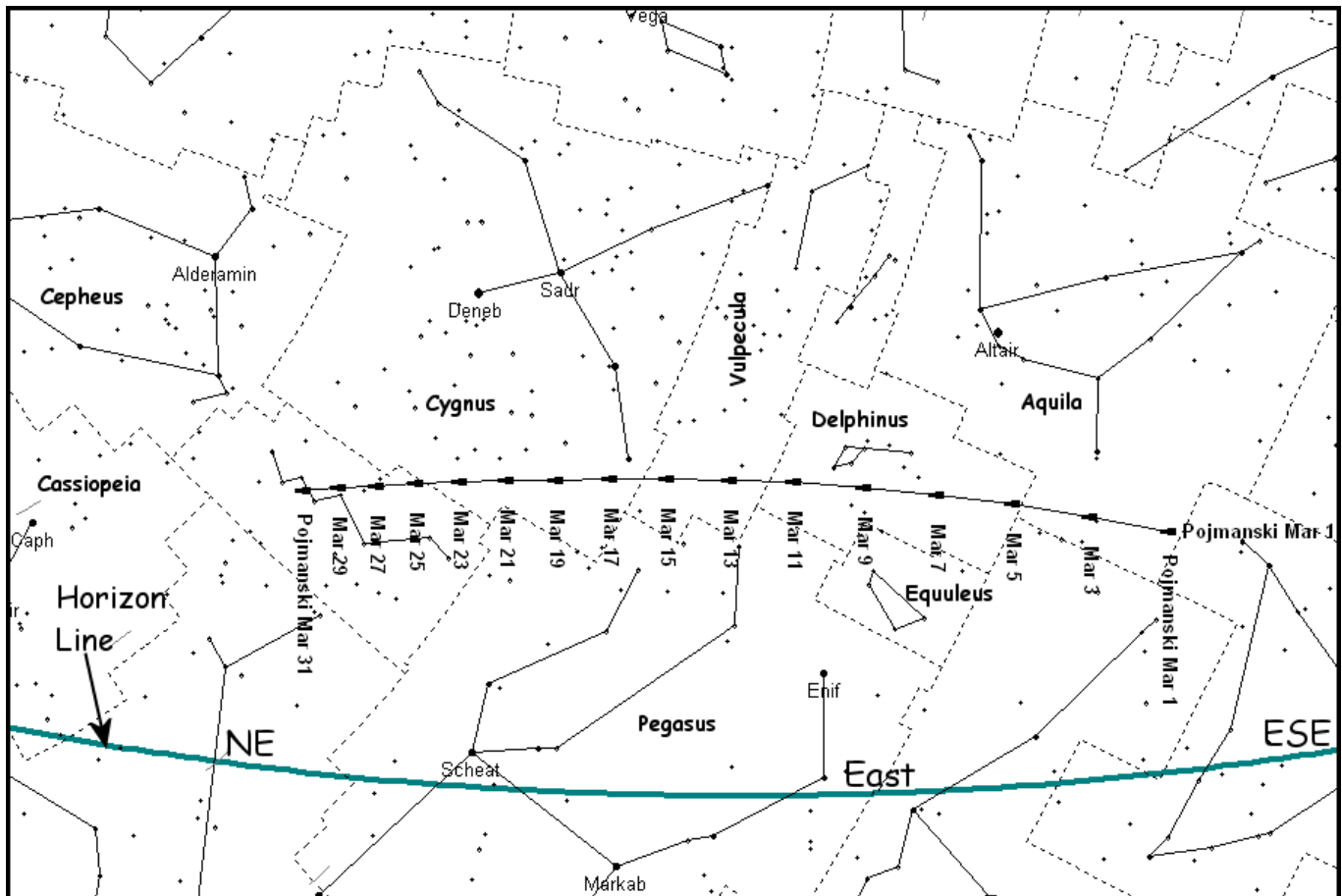
HAC salutes and welcomes the following new members: George L. Jones (Taylor, MI) and Judy Sukol (Sierra Vista)!

>> HAC MONTHLY MEETING <<
FRIDAY, MARCH 10, 2006 <<

7 pm, Cochise College, Sierra Vista, Rm. 305

Guest Speaker: Mr. George Barber, TAAA; Topic: The Color of Stars
PLUS: Show-n-Tell, HAC's Messier Marathon Tips, Door Prize, Latest Astro-News

CONGRATULATIONS TO DAVE HEALY!! He has finally been honored with the naming of Minor Planet (66479) Healy. It is a main belt asteroid discovered in 1999 at a southern California observatory and which orbits the Sun every 4.4 years. At its closest approach to Earth, it comes within about 1 AU. Dave's own asteroid discovery work at Junk Bond Observatory has so far resulted in 384 new IAU designations, 20 of which have been numbered and 14 have been named.



CATCH A COMET in the morning sky. Path of comet C/2006 A1 Pojmanski during March 2006 showing the comet at 5:45 am on each date. On Mar. 5, its altitude above the horizon is near 23° and the azimuth is 101° (East= 90°); Mar. 29, 37° alt., az = 52°. Use Binoculars, sweep the area. March magnitudes range from 6.5(1st) to 9.3 (31st)



Star Party Corner—Keith Mullen, Star Party Coordinator (520)366-0049; repogazer@wavmax.com

February was a quiet month on the Star Party circuit, having the Public Star Party scheduled at JBO weathered out and no Full Moon Workshop, we did get in at least one outreach event at the Huachuca Oaks Baptist Camp; Doug Snyder, Dave Healy, Rich Swanson along with Hans Clahsen and myself entertained 38 young campers after a shaky start with some clouds, these kids are great, always asking good questions and very polite, try to make one if you can find the time. (We need members to assist with scopes out on the Fort on March 30—See below)
To end February, we invaded Hans and Joanne Clahsen’s Alkira Observatory for the member Star Party, which was also Alkira’s First Light night; the attendance list was too long to go over each individual but we enjoyed a couple of dozen members and had 9 scopes on the ground that night; “Something Special” is happening at HAC events again, PARTICIPATION, it works wonders!

March Star Party Schedule

Friday March 17th: Public Star Party at JBO, lets get out there and give Dave a hand and have some fun doing it, telescopes are always welcome. These PSP’s are becoming more popular with folks around Sierra Vista and we are seeing larger gatherings, so I am asking members to turn out and help out! They are fun and educational for all of us! Besides, how often do you have the opportunity to view through a world class 32” Ritchey-Chretien Telescope?

Saturday March 18th: The Full Moon Telescope Workshop returns to Bob and Barb Keppel’s Desert Starlight Observatory; the topic of this month’s workshop will be Learning to Use and Understand Star Charts and other celestial aids. Bob promises to get us up to speed on what it takes to successfully plan out an evenings observing session. If its clear we’ll do some observing for a couple hours before the Moon comes up. The topic is Observing for Beginners. We’ll also talk about how to use data tables, and what to look for when observing different types of deep-sky objects. We’ll talk about what minutes, and seconds of arc mean and how they relate to the field of view at the eyepiece. We’ll also cover position angles, right ascension, declination, etc. and also field questions. Bob and Barb will throw out a spread of munchies and I heard something about PIZZA’S to.. So do yourself a Favor and don’t miss this one, it could lead to some unconfused time behind the eyepiece, time will be 4 PM with some observational tips following the class that evening. If much of this ‘lingo’ is Greek to you, this workshop if for you! For directions see the HAC Web Page under Maps and Directions or call Bob at 366-0490.

Saturday March 25th: Member Star Party and HAC Messier Marathon

Thanks to the efforts of a 17th century French Comet Hunter and the fact that none of his catalogued objects lie in the western portion of Aquarius or Eastern Pisces, we are treated to an annual astronomical observation treat, The Messier Marathon. For two or three nights in early spring every year we are able to observe all 110 of the Messier Objects in one night. Proper alignment of the Moon and Sun, a telescope, and some warm clothes along with a well prepared observational plan, and YOU can do it to. This years Marathon promises to be one of the best, with observing conditions being the most favorable found in the last decade.

Keith and Teresa Mullen are hosting this year’s event on Saturday, March 25th at their home and observatory in Palominas. We are encouraging ALL HAC members who have the metal to endure an entire night behind the eyepiece, “sundown to sunup” to give it a shot! Anyone may attend the event as it’s also our Monthly Members Star Party and there will be additional challenges for those wishing to try to locate their own list of objects. Certificates of achievement from the HAC Board will be awarded to those who weather the entire night irregardless of the number of M’s caught, and special awards to those who complete the list. There will be sequential lists provided to aid you in locating those early evening and late morning toughies that make the Marathon a challenge.

So mark your calendars for **March 25th** and come out to RGO for Food, fun and an evening of Messier Madness as HAC presents the 2006 Messier Marathon. Directions In the HAC Web Page or call Keith at 366-0049.

March 30th(Thu): HAC Outreach: General Myers School, Ft. Huachuca; 7—8:30 pm. Sign Up with Jeanne H.

Huachuca Astronomy Club P.O. Box 922 Sierra Vista, AZ 85636 <http://c3po.cochise.edu/astro>; email hac@palominas.com
Yearly Membership: Individual: \$25; Family: \$35; Military: \$20; student:\$10 (with conditions)
President: Doug Snyder (520) 366-5788 (starhaven@palominas.com); Vice President: Wayne Johnson; Treasurer: Tim Doyle 378-5121;
Secretary: Jeanne Herbert; Star Party Coordinator: Keith Mullen 366-0049;
Public Events Coordinator: Jeanne Herbert(jeanne_hrbt@yahoo.com) 366-5690 (early evenings)

This issue of NightFall can also be found on-line at <http://c3po.cochise.edu/astro>. Click on the ‘Newsletter’ link. There is much more information about astronomy and our HAC activities on our club web site. *To join the HAC-LIST, send an email to haclist-subscribe@yahoogroups.com .



HAVE FUN WHILE SHARPENING YOUR OBSERVING SKILLS!

Check out the Astronomical League's Observing Clubs

Many HAC members, I suspect, leave their telescopes or binoculars in the garage or in the closet because, after having looked at Saturn and the Orion Nebula, they don't know what to look at next—they have no systematic observing program.

A great way to get more out of astronomy as a hobby is to qualify for membership in one or more of the Astronomical League's Observing Clubs. Our own Huachuca Astronomy Club is a member of the League, which is the national organization of over 200 astronomy clubs. The AL's first observing program, the Messier Club, dates back more than 30 years. The League now offers 39 observing programs, or Clubs, and more are being added all the time. Those completing the required observations for a particular Club receive a personalized certificate, and awardees' names are posted on that Club's web page and published in the League's quarterly, The Reflector. Completion of any one of the clubs' requirements will set you on the path toward becoming a skilled observer.

Requirements for membership in a particular club range in difficulty from a list of 39 naked-eye constellation sightings (The Constellation Club) to telescopic observations or CCD images of 150 galaxy trios, galaxy groups and Abell Clusters (The Galaxy Groups & Clusters Club). There's even a Sky Puppy Club, whose membership is limited to those age 10 or under, a Lunar Club (for when the moon shuts you out of deep sky observing) and an Urban Club, if you're buried in Phoenix! Those qualifying for ten clubs (five required and five elective) automatically become members of the exclusive Master Observer Club.

We know of five HAC members who are either AL Club awardees or working toward certificates. THAT'S NOWHERE NEAR ENOUGH!!! Go to www.astroleague.org and select the OBSERVING CLUBS link. There you will find complete information on all 39 Clubs, enabling you to select one (or half a dozen to work on at leisure) that fit your inclinations and skill levels. Enjoy!

(Next month: The Messier Club and the Comet Club)
Dave Healy, HAC's Astronomical League Correspondent



HAC NOTES: LOANER TELESCOPES

Hey members, and especially new members! We have three fine telescopes available for folks to sign-out and use for a month or so at no charge! Let one of these help you view and learn the night sky.

We have a 6" Celestron Dobsonian, an 8" Orion XT8 Dobsonian and a 10" Meade LX200GPS-SMT Schmidt-Cassegrain. Contact Gary Myers for more information—520.432.4433 or RXDesign@ssvechnet.com

An unused scope is a sad scope.



HAC NOTES: THE HAC- LIST FORUM

There's a lack of communication here, and I'm disturbed (well everyone knows that)! Since 1999, our club has had its own discussion group on the Internet where members can get or pass on breaking astronomy news, ask questions, discuss club or astronomy issues, & chat with other hac-list members, etc. It is safe and secure!

If you are not a member of our hac-list, but do have an email account of any sort, I ask you to PLEASE JOIN and participate! Just send an email to hac-list-subscribe@yahoogroups.com to get started. Questions? Call Doug at 520.366.5788 or ask me on hac-list!

Travels on the Celestial Sphere

Observers-Glen Sanner and John Cassella

NIGHTFALL (HAC NEWSLETTER) MARCH 2006

2-1-06 Luration 16.8%, Mag. -9.8; Clear & Cool; Seeing-3.5 (5), Transparency 7 (10); Telescope: 18.5" Dob

John Cassella and I started looking at a group of galaxies near the Eridanus/Orion border. NGC 1653 was one of a group of 3 supposedly bright galaxies, as all are in Sky Atlas 2000. They were NGC 1653, 1638, and 1637.

NGC 1653 was found and was easily visible. In an 11 mm Nagler type I eyepiece it is bright, has a stellar core, and is 6' west of an arrowhead shaped asterism of 6 or 7 stars. The galaxy has a brighter core and is slightly elongated N/S spanning perhaps 2' along its major axis. Now we take a brief detour.

PGC 15951 (Nag 11 mm) This galaxy is 12' N of 1653, and appears as a small 1' amorphous glow. It is next to a pair of 12th mag. stars one of which is a double (eastern most). This galaxy is at mag. 15.7.

NGC 1654 (Nag 11 mm) 7' N of PGC 15951 we find this galaxy 3' E of a trapezium of 11th magnitude stars. This galaxy is the second brightest of the group and appears round with a bright core and a small 1' distinct halo.

NGC 1657 (Nag 11 mm) Continuing E 5' we find this galaxy at magnitude 14.6 on the edge of visibility as a non-distinct oval glow. Using the Pentax 7 mm XW the galaxy was seen more easily.

NGC 1661 (Nag 11 mm) Continuing E from 1657 perhaps 15' you reach an L shaped asterism of 3 equally bright 12th magnitude stars-between 2 of which is a 14th magnitude double star. 2' NE of this double is a circular galaxy less than 1' in diameter having an evenly illuminated halo with only a slightly brighter core.

UGC 3168 (Nag 11 mm) Continuing SSE 18' from 1661 a 4 star asterism appears in a relatively straight line going NNE-SSW at the southwestern tip of which is an extremely faint, evenly illuminated, circular glow having a diameter of approximately 1.5'. This was a very difficult galaxy to detect using averted vision, by moving the scope back and forth the detection of this elusive galaxy was enabled. It appeared to be 2 times the diameter of 1661. This galaxy is at magnitude 14.9 but due to its low surface brightness it is very difficult to detect.

2MASX J04474827-0215028 aka (LEDA 1097438) (Nag 11 mm) Continuing 5' NE of 3168 and 2' SE of this 4 star asterism we found this galaxy as a 0.5' NE-SW elongation with a slightly brighter core. This galaxy was difficult to detect but not as difficult as UGC 3168. The elongation was readily seen after detecting the galaxy. A 15th magnitude stars lies 1.5' south of this faint galaxy. This galaxy is at magnitude 16.4 but was much easier to detect than 3168 due to its core, elongation and higher surface brightness.

These seven galaxies in Eridanus consumed about 3 hours of observing time well spent. John and I hope you try to observe this group of galaxies in the coming months and give us your input.

Note that on the MegaStar chart below, magnitudes are shown without the decimal point (143 = 14.3)

